

The Sandpaper
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by Maria Scandale

The shore has another fight on its hands- but it has rescued its beach nourishment funding before from the chopping blocks of past presidential budgets.

On May 18, the White House released its final budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2010, and Ocean County beach replenishment projects are not in it.

Calling the exclusion "unacceptable," U.S. Congressman John Adler reminded in a press release that the president's budget is only a recommendation to Congress, and it does not have the force of law. Congress will decide what projects will be funded through the annual appropriations bills.

"I will continue to work to ensure that our shores...receive the necessary and appropriate funding," Adler said Monday.

Key Long Beach Island officials will be doing their part Long Beach Township Mayor Joseph H. Mancini indicated in a brief telephone interview Tuesday that the governing body would not take the denial as the last word. The township had previously requested being the next Island municipality to be funded for beach replenishment.

"We're going to start lobbying pretty hard," Mancini said, "We're proceeding as if the money is there, because I know that by the time this fall comes, we'll have the money in place. It's just smoke and mirrors right now, but we'll get to the bottom of it, I'm sure everybody will accommodate us."

Adler has inherited the shore protection funding battle from his predecessor, retired Congressman Jim Saxton, who fought every year to have money restored through

congressional appropriations bill hearings. Mancini's father, the late James J. Mancini, was also a veteran shore protection proponent, having been mayor of the township for more than four decades and an Ocean County freeholder, as well as a previous state assemblyman.

The uncertainty of funding in the 2010 fiscal year budget does not affect the next project planned for Long Beach Island, replenishment in Harvey Cedars. That money is already appropriated in the FY 2009 budget, an Army Corps project manager confirmed.

"We got money in the Fiscal Year '09 budget allowing us to do the beach fill in Harvey Cedars," said Keith Watson, project manager of the Long Beach Island Storm Damage Reduction Project. "We're optimistic that the project will be completed this year."

However, at this stage, the amount or availability of future funding is "very unclear," Watson said.

"We're going to use the money we have to do Harvey Cedars and wait for additional funding to do another section of beach fill" at a town yet to be determined, Watson said, " But as always, my district of the Corps will be ready to move quickly once the funding does become available."

When Watson speaks of optimism that the Harvey Cedars project will be finished this year, he is referring to the unfinished business of obtaining signed easements from homeowners. "The bids have been postponed because of the real estate situation," he said. " Funding and real estate easements, we need both of those items to be able to continue the project somewhere on the Island."

For FY 2010, Adler had requested \$20 million for beach replenishment on Long Beach Island. In March, he sent a letter to the White House Office of Management and Budget urging the administration to fund beach replenishment projects in the Recovery Package.

The Budget also leaves out necessary funding for military construction projects at McGuire Air Force Base, Fort Dix and Lakehurst Naval Air Engineering Station, Adler said.

"Beach replenishment and military construction are essential projects to South Jersey's local economy. Leaving these projects out of the budget is unacceptable," Adler said.

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